

for war crimes, sir?

The President. We're not going to get into that. These matters will all be discussed in appropriate forums. We've got a United Nations track, diplomatic track going forward, and we have the military track that will go forward. And so, I'll leave those matters to our experts to work out.

Q. But just to be clear, have they agreed to the February 22 demands, conditions?

The President. We will—let's wait and see how these meetings unfold to what they've agreed to. They have met this one condition, which is very good, and they met it promptly, and that is that we are going to get together and send high-level military representatives. And we are going to get back our POW's, and we are going to do it fast. And we've got a few other matters of urgent concern that will be resolved fairly and in keeping with the determination that our fighting forces have showed.

Q. Sir, where will the meeting be held?

The President. Have not set a place yet. I really have told you about all I know about the logistics on it. But we're very pleased that it is going to go forward. And once again, it is a special day, and, Ambassador,

I just can't tell you what's in my heart, but I am very pleased, very proud that your country is free.

Q. Where did you hear it from? The U.N.?

The President. I refer you to the proper authorities on that. They're across at the State Department.

Thank you, Miss Thomas [Helen Thomas, United Press International], for your interest.

Note: The Ambassador spoke at 3:15 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. The following persons were referred to: Lt. Gen. Walter E. Boomer, commander general of the I Marine Expeditionary Forces (Forward) in the Persian Gulf; Patricia Presock, Deputy Assistant to the President; Amir Jabir al-Ahmad al-Jabir al-Sabah of Kuwait; Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney; Secretary of State James A. Baker III; Gen. Colin L. Powell, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff; Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, commander of the U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf; King Fahd bin 'Abd al-'Aziz Al Sa'ud of Saudi Arabia; Nawaf al-Sabah, the Ambassador's son; and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq.

Remarks and an Exchange With Reporters Prior to Discussions with Prince Bandar bin Sultan of Saudi Arabia

February 28, 1991

The President. We are very grateful to His Majesty for this total cooperation. In the beginning, we think back to all the predictions of how the command problems would not work, and here it's not only worked but it's worked so much faster.

The Prince. This adds sweetness to it.

The President. Yes. So, please tell His Majesty how grateful we are for the steadfast support. When we talk coalition, I mean, that's exactly what it is. Incidentally, your briefer has won the hearts of many Americans, including Barbara Bush over there. And so I think the Brits did a good job, too, and the French.

But it's been superb from the very beginning. What's the mood at home on all of

this?

The Prince. Well, the mood is excellent, Mr. President, and I am here on behalf of His Majesty and the Saudi people to extend to you and through you to the American people our gratitude, thanks—and also to let you know that you should be very proud of the United States Armed Forces. They did a marvelous job. And I think their professionalism, their capabilities speak for itself. But also, how sensitive those young men and women were also, over and above all of that, to the culture of the country.

The President. Yes.

The Prince. And I think people in this

country should be very proud of them. And we all are proud of you and your leadership—the steadiness and how you got the whole world to be together. As you say, in this country, the proof is in the pudding. [Laughter]

The President. Is in the eating. But it's worked well. You know, I remember the early days, the question mark as to whether these Iraqi forces would have gone south. The more I think about it—and I don't know whether we have any differences on that—the more I think that if they had not been checked by your people and our people in a display of force early, I'm convinced they would have.

The Prince. I am convinced——

The President. They have not acted rationally. And so I think we did the right thing back in August. And then on, when Dick moved these additional forces, I think that facilitated the battle in a way that's kept your loss of life, our loss of life way, way down from the earlier predictions.

So, all that display of force and then use of force I think has served a very noble purpose; I really do.

The Prince. Absolutely, Mr. President. We would be fighting in the eastern province of Saudi Arabia right now if you didn't make that decisive decision at the right time. And one thing I want to say, we have healthy respect for the Iraqi people and the Iraqi forces. The reason they didn't fight is they didn't believe in the cause or their leader. We discovered it now, although all the pundits in this town told us otherwise. But we knew our brothers in Iraq, they really didn't believe in that cause. And proof of it is 100,000 prisoners, almost, now.

The President. Is it that many now?

The Prince. Almost.

The President. Well, we've tried to make clear, and I did last night, that our argument

has not been with the Iraqi people. We've said that from the very beginning. And let's hope that they realize the best way to—or the most peaceful relationship is to go on and get matters into their own hands and take a new lease on life.

Contact With Allies

Q. Mr. President, are you planning to go back to the Middle East and to Europe to thank the allies?

The President. Well, I plan to thank the allies. I was just talking to Bandar, His Royal Highness, about calling King Fahd. I've not done that yet because I think, in his first 24 hours of emotional victory, if you will, there are many things on his mind. But I will certainly be thanking him in one way or another for the extraordinary cooperation. And of course, our commander out there has expressed his gratitude, and I know Secretary Cheney has, through proper authorities. So, we will make clear to the Ambassador's countrymen how strongly we feel about it.

And I think they—it's been a two-way street—they have been—I've watched the response from the Saudi troops, and it's been a two-way street. Their joy, I think, being side by side with our people.

The Prince. That's true.

Q. Heard any more from Iraq in the last few minutes?

The President. Have you heard anything yet from Iraq lately? I mean, we have——

The Prince. No, other than what's public.

Note: The President spoke at 5:40 p.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks he referred to King Fahd bin 'Abd al-'Aziz Al Sa'ud of Saudi Arabia, Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney, and Gen. H. Norman Schwarzkopf, commander of the U.S. forces in the Persian Gulf.